



A MONTHLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER TO THE 41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
(Including Agoura, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Encino, Hidden Hills, Lake Sherwood, Malibu, Oak Park, Pacific Palisades, Port Hueneme, South Oxnard, Santa Monica, Tarzana, Topanga, Westlake Village, and Woodland Hills)

JANUARY 2008

Governor Releases Proposed 2008-09 Budget. Nonpartisan Legislative Analyst Comments.

California's 2008-09 budget process began this year with \$14.5 billion hole in the state's finances – one of the deepest in state history – caused by the convergence of a declining national economic outlook; sagging state revenues, especially related to the housing crisis; and rising costs, including from court cases and natural disasters like the recent and terrible Southern California wildfires. The Governor declared a state of fiscal emergency, and called the Legislature into a special session that accelerates normal budget deadlines.

On January 8, Governor Schwarzenegger released his proposed budget. It set forth more than \$17 billion in budget balancing actions to close the substantial shortfall. Roughly half of his plan is either borrowing, putting off debt payments, or counting 2009-10 revenue in 2008-09, coupled with 10% across-the-board cuts to most state agencies and programs.

THE GOVERNOR'S BASIC PROPOSALS:

- Issue \$3.3 billion more in deficit-financing bonds.
- Suspend an extra \$1.5 billion payment planned for next year on the bonds.
- Accrue \$2 billion in 2009-10 revenues to 2008-09.
- Reduce current year K-14 education spending by \$400 million, and suspend the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee (\$4.7 billion).
- Reduce spending across most other state programs (\$4 billion).



*Legislative Analyst
Elizabeth Hill*

On January 14, Elizabeth Hill, the state's highly regarded nonpartisan Legislative Analyst, released her initial assessment – "Overview of the Governor's Budget." The entire 23-page document can be accessed at www.lao.ca.gov.

"ALL STATE PROGRAMS ARE NOT EQUALLY IMPORTANT."

While the LAO says that the proposal to make 10% across-the-board reductions has "the appeal of fairness," she goes on to say that "it reflects little effort to prioritize and determine which state programs provide essential services or are most critical for California's future." Instead, she recommends that the Legislature (1) eliminate or further reduce low-priority programs in order to minimize the impact on higher priority programs; and (2) examine additional revenue options "as part of a more balanced approach."

WHAT'S PROPOSED FOR EDUCATION?

Nothing good. Across-the-board reductions for General Fund K-12 programs. \$400 million less this fiscal year for K-14 education spending, plus suspending the voter-passed Proposition 98 minimum guarantee to schools in 2008-09 – reducing school spending by an unprecedented \$4.7 billion.

School advocates are calling the proposed K-12 cuts for this current year “devastating,” and the suspension of Proposition 98 untenable for next year.



Assembly Budget Committee Hearing

Although the University of California and California State University schools would not be cut this year, the Governor is asking each to take a \$100 million hit next year. Students would bear the burden in the form of yet more tuition increases, caps on enrollment, and cuts to programs. All of this in the face of the Governor’s proclamation just a few months ago that 2008 would be “The Year of Education.”

Basically, the Governor’s proposal is a “cuts-only” budget that certainly doesn’t reflect the kind of future California deserves. It slashes funding for practically everything – public schools, and our colleges and universities; health care; services for the poor, elderly and disabled; and even cuts law enforcement and requires the early release of tens of thousands of prison inmates. We would lose the benefit of leveraging hundreds of millions of dollars with Federal matching funds. And finally, he proposes to close 48 state parks, including Will Rogers State Historic Park, Los Encinos State Park, and Topanga State Park in my district.

I have been hearing from my constituents who are very concerned in particular about the proposed cuts to schools and to our state parks. We need a more balanced approach to getting the state’s finances in order. We need more creative thinking that is focused on the long term. Since 2004, important services that Californians depend on have already had to absorb \$12 billion in cuts.

As the LAO was releasing her largely critical comments on the Governor’s budget proposal, including the heavy reliance on borrowing and accounting gimmicks, a New York credit rating firm downgraded California from “stable outlook” to “rating watch negative.” Stay tuned.

New Agreement Insures Highest Level of Cleanup of Santa Susana Field Laboratory

For decades, the Santa Susana Field Laboratory, former Rocketdyne engine testing site in the Chatsworth hills has been spewing toxic and radioactive waste into the air, the soil and down into the groundwater, causing extensive contamination both on- and off-site. Current owner is the Boeing Company.

State Senator Sheila Kuehl carried bill after bill attempting to get this site cleaned up before it could ever be released for the contemplated development. All failed until last October, when Governor Schwarzenegger signed her bill, SB 990, but only on condition that the SB 990 cleanup standards be gutted in new legislation and replaced with standards to be negotiated with Boeing. After infuriated community members demanded that the administration reconsider, a Letter of Intent was negotiated and, on January 15, signed by the State of California and key community members and environmental and health groups. It locks in SB 990 as the very strict cleanup standard, and abandons any idea of weakening the level of cleanup. This is great news and an enormous victory for the environment.

I am extraordinarily grateful to a great many people who got us to this place. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to CalEPA Secretary Linda Adams who personally met many times, and at great length, with the community members over the past several weeks. She really listened, and then took action. Dan Hirsch, nuclear activist from the Committee to Bridge the Gap, was the community's voice and champion, insuring that the best possible science determined the standards, not the desires of the polluter. And it couldn't have happened without the bipartisan vote that passed SB 990 last October. I am deeply grateful to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their support.

Lastly, my heartfelt thanks to my colleague, Sheila Kuehl, for her years of work. She never gave up. Anyone who knows her knew that she never would. And because of her determination that the public health must be protected, in spite of legislative defeat after defeat at the hands of Rocketdyne and Boeing, as they fought every step along the way, cleanup of the Santa Susana Field Laboratory site will now to the highest standards possible. The community members who fought so hard and for so long can finally celebrate!

Tour of Oxnard College

I recently had the pleasure of having a tour of Oxnard College, one of the three community colleges in the 41st AD, along with Pierce College and Santa Monica College.

My hosts were President Dr. Richard Duran; Ventura County Community College Trustees, Cheryl Heitmann and Stephen Blum; and we were joined by several college staff members. I was impressed by the outstanding credit- and non-credit programs that the college offers in Fire Prevention Training, a critical profession in a district that includes all of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Some of the outstanding firefighters that saved lives and property during the recent fire activity may have taken advantage of this important program.

Oxnard College was also recently awarded a Title V grant that has allowed for improved efforts to build bridges from high school to Oxnard College, and from Oxnard College to four-year colleges and universities. Dr. Duran was pleased to report that enrollment is now trending upward.

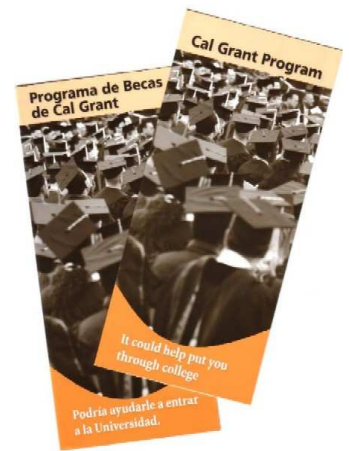
Congratulations to Oxnard College on the wonderful job that they are doing to serve the needs of their students.

Need Cash for College?

2.0 GPA + 2 FORMS + 1 DEADLINE = UP TO \$9,700 ANNUALLY!

The state's Cal Grants are one of the smartest ways to get cash for college. It's money you don't have to pay back. Plus it's **guaranteed**.

If you're a graduating high school senior or recent graduate, and meet academic, financial and eligibility requirements, just submit two forms **by March 2**. You can do it all online at www.calgrants.org. Or visit one of the workshops where they will help you fill out the forms. Workshop locations are listed on the Cal Grants website, or call my District Office to get the date and location of the scheduled workshop closest to you.



College Grad and Interested in Public Service?

Then consider applying for a Capital Fellowship. These are outstanding opportunities to engage in public service and prepare for a future career by working for 11 months as a full-time staff member of a California state legislative, executive, or judicial branch office. Earn 12 graduate units from California State University Sacramento in Government or Public Policy and Administration. Receive a \$1,972 monthly stipend, plus full health, vision, and dental benefits.

For more information and qualifications to apply, go to www.csus.edu/calst/programs.



"Legislator of the Year" Award from High School Advocacy Group

I was very honored this month to be recognized by the California League of High Schools (CLHS) as their "2008 Legislator of the Year." The award was presented on January 12 at the League's Annual Conference in Monterey – "High Schools as Learning Communities: Engaging Students to Close the Achievement Gap" – attended by approximately 800 high school teachers and administrators.

Assemblymember Brownley and CLHS' Legislative Chair, Duneen DeBruhl

Water District Says "Please Keep Conserving"

Although the rains over the past several weeks have been welcome, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District warns that they have not diminished the need to conserve, nor our responsibility not to waste this precious resource. Las Virgenes MWD is entirely dependent on supplies pumped from the Sacramento Delta through the State Water Project, and in late December the capacity to pump water to Southern California was cut in half by court order. The good news is that customers quickly responded to the request for voluntary cutbacks in water consumption.

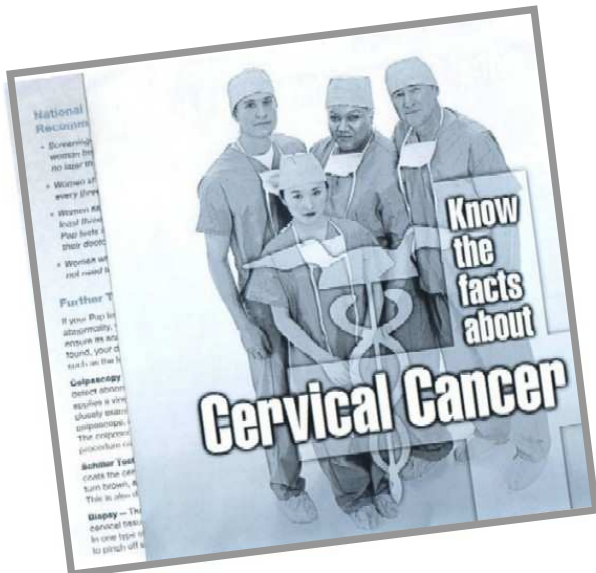
Regardless of who your water company is, please do your part:

- In new landscaping, reduce the amount of lawn and increase the use of "California Friendly" drought-tolerant plants.
- Reduce irrigation times and adjust sprinklers so they are properly directed.
- Replace old toilets and shower heads with water-saving fixtures. (And check your water company's website for money-saving rebates.)
- Sweep driveways and walks, don't hose them down.
- Wash only full loads, whether laundry or dishes.



Photo: Las Virgenes Municipal Water District

If you belong to a homeowner association or other group in the Las Virgenes MWD service area, they would love to come out and speak to your members. Call (818) 251-2200 to schedule a presentation.



Cervical Health Awareness Month

The U.S. Congress has designated January as Cervical Health Awareness Month. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 12,000 new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed each year. 3,700 women die. Yet cervical cancer is largely preventable, and it is curable if detected and treated early.

My office has prepared a brochure entitled "Know the Facts About Cervical Cancer." It contains information on early signs and symptoms, recommendations about screening and testing from the National Cancer Institute, and contact information for resources. Copies are available both to individuals and to groups or organizations that are interested in knowing more about this disease that remains a serious health threat among women. Call my District Office to request copies.

Committee and Legislative Appointments

Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #2 on Education

Aging and Long-Term Care

Budget

Budget Subcommittee #3 on Resources

Education

Natural Resources

Joint Legislative Budget Committee

Select Committee on Community Colleges

Select Committee on Domestic Violence

Select Committee on State School Financial Takeovers

Legislative Liaison, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission

Legislative Participant, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

California Commission on the Status of Women

HOW TO REACH ME:

District Office:

6355 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Suite 205

Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Phones: (818) 596-4141 □ (805) 644-4141 □ (310) 395-3414

Fax: (818) 596-4150

Capitol Office:

State Capitol

P.O. Box 942849

Sacramento, CA 94249-0041

Phone: (916) 319-2041

Fax: (916) 319-2141

democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a41/ or www.assembly.ca.gov